



NEWS

Release

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Colville National Forest

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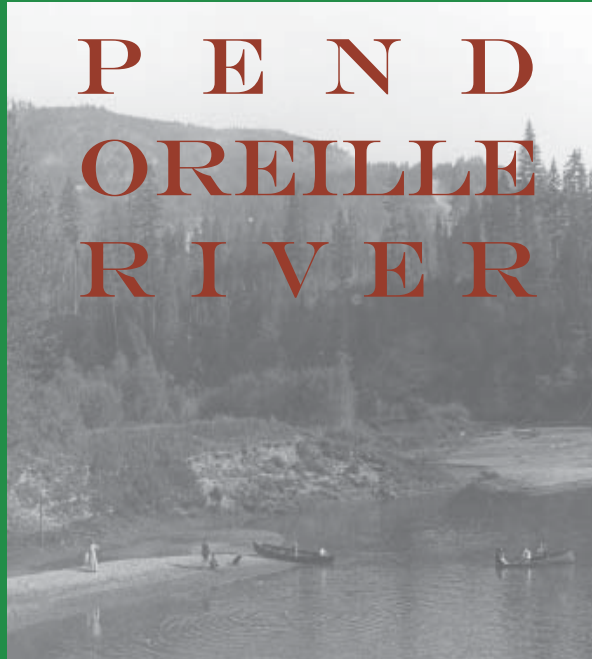
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P E N D O R E I L L E R I V E R



Colville National Forest submits draft terms, Conditions to be included in Box Canyon FEIS

Colville, Wash., -- The Colville National Forest submitted its draft terms and conditions to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Tuesday, November 19 to be included in a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for the relicensing of the Box Canyon Hydroelectric (dam) Project.

The national forest modified, dropped or combined some of its original terms and conditions -- submitted to FERC in March, 2002 -- in response to information contained in the commission's DEIS which was released on September 9, 2002.

The DEIS assesses the environmental and economic

effects of the Box Canyon Dam operations, as well as alternatives to proposed projects, and makes recommendations to the Commission on whether or not to issue a new license, and if so, what terms and conditions will become a part of the license requirements.

After nearly two months of analyzing public input and new information, a core group of natural resource specialists from the Colville National Forest modified preliminary licensing requirements for the dam which is owned and operated by Pend Oreille County Public Utility District (PUD) #1 in Newport, Wash.

According to Nora Rasure, forest supervisor of the Colville National Forest, the revised, 200-page document reduces duplication of requirements made by the Forest Service and those of the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Washington State Department of Ecology, Environmental Protection Agency, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians and other regulatory agencies.

"Other agencies also provided early advice and recommendations to FERC to ensure the licensee complies with state and federal laws," Rasure said. "Some of that input also applies to the management of

National Forest System lands and so, in some instances, those agencies are taking the lead on those issues," Rasure said.

Public comments made to FERC and the national forest played a role in helping refine our recommendations, Rasure said.

"We provided a lot of information about our resource concerns to the public along with many opportunities for comment and feedback about our original recommendations," Rasure said. "We have now incorporated that input into our comments on the DEIS and hope FERC incorporates this information into the final environmental impact statement," she said.

TECHNICAL CONTACTS:

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Add One

Rasure said public opinions expressed about requiring the licensee to create a recreation trail system near the project that would accommodate increasing numbers of visitors to the reservoir influenced her decision to drop the proposal. She said she also dropped the requirement for a new shoreline and visual management plan.

The Forest Service will still require a recreation plan and specific activities on National Forest System lands, but the licensee will follow FERC's guidelines for shoreline and visual management, she said.

Other requirements that were dropped include a threatened and endangered species consultation plan, avian protection plan, certain project inspections, seismic evaluations and designs, and drawdowns to control nonnative aquatic vegetation, such as Eurasian milfoil.

"Most of these concerns will be dealt with by other federal agencies, including the Washington Department of Ecology or US Fish and Wildlife Service," she said.

Rasure said the Colville National Forest also dropped specific water quality measures that affect fish habitat such as water temperature and pH. "The licensee will comply with Washington State Department of Ecology water quality standards as required by the Clean Water Act," she said. "Recommended improvements and changes will reduce detrimental effects to fish and fish habitat that presently occur in the project area," she added.

Box Canyon Hydroelectric Project

The Box Canyon Hydroelectric Project was licensed on February 5, 1952. The license was amended in 1999 through a settlement agreement to change the project area boundary. The Project is currently operating under an annual license. The existing project :

- consists of a 46-foot high, 160-foot long reinforced concrete dam with integral spillway, 1,170-foot long forebay channel and 8,850 acre reservoir,
- inundates 55.7 miles of the lower Pend Oreille River, mostly within Pend Oreille County
- includes a pumping plant at the mouth of Calispell Creek that carries the flow of Calispell Creek over a flood control dike.



BOX CANYON HYDROPOWER PROJECT



More ...

Add Two



"The Colville National Forest is continuing to coordinate with other state and federal agencies and the Tribe and working with the PUD and other stakeholders to explore mutually acceptable solutions to resource issues associated with the project," she said.

"Unless an agreement can be established, we will begin another segment of public involvement and analysis for our final terms and conditions in January. FERC anticipates the release of its final environmental impact statement sometime in March or April, 2003," she said.

For more information about the Box Canyon Hydroelectric Project (FERC No. 2042) and copies of the USDA Forest Service Preliminary 4(e) and Draft 4(e) Conditions, please go to http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/colville/forest/projects/box_canyon.html or call (509) 684-7000 or write the Colville National Forest at 765 South Main Street, Colville, Wash., 99114.

End

Eurasian Watermilfoil in the Pend Oreille River



Eurasian watermilfoil (*Myriophyllum spicatum*) is an extremely aggressive nonnative aquatic weed once sold in this country as an aquarium plant. Its dense weed beds grow rapidly,

choke native plants and spread easily to new areas. Eurasian watermilfoil currently flourishes in Idaho, Washington and British Columbia. It is a serious threat to our rivers and lakes.

Eurasian watermilfoil has leaves with 12 to 21 leaflet pairs, as shown in the picture in the upper left. Native watermilfoils have 7 to 14 leaflet pairs.

Eurasian watermilfoil was accidentally introduced to North America from Europe. Its spread westward into inland lakes and streams is primarily attributed to boats, with some spreading caused by water birds.

Once introduced into a river or lake, Eurasian watermilfoil rapidly forms thick mats that severely hamper swimming, boating, and fishing. On some stretches of the Pend Oreille River in Washington, navigation and recreation have become virtually impossible. Watermilfoil has also caused drownings by tangling swimmers in the thick beds.

Watermilfoil alters rivers and lakes by reducing natural plant diversity, thus harming fish and wildlife habitat. Watermilfoil also invades fish spawning beds, clogs irrigation intake pipes, and hinders power generation.

In nutrient-rich lakes, it can form thick underwater stands of tangled stems and vast mats of vegetation at the water's surface. By midsummer it forms a "mat" so dense it restricts swimming, boating and fishing.

BOX CANYON HYDROPOWER PROJECT